

Michèle and Laurent Pétin
present

Mathieu
AMALRIC

Marine
VACTH

Gilles
LELLOUCHE

Guillaume
DE TONQUEDEC

André
DUSSOLIER

Gemma
CHAN

Nicole
GARCIA

Karin
VIARD

Families

A film by
JEAN-PAUL RAPPENEAU



ARP - PRESENT «FAMILIES» MATHIEU AMALRIC MARINE VACTH GILLES LELLOUCHE NICOLE GARCIA KARIN VIARD GUILLAUME DE TONQUEDEC GEMMA CHAN ANDRÉ DUSSOLIER SCENARIO BY JEAN-PAUL RAPPENEAU MUSIC BY PHILIPPE LE CHAY AND JULIEN RAPPENEAU EDITOR ON AN ORIGINAL IDEA OF JEAN-PAUL RAPPENEAU AND JACQUES FESCHÉ DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY THÉRIER ARBOGAST PROD. SOUND MIGUEL REJAS JEAN BOUDIER JEAN-PAUL HUBERT PRODUCTION DESIGN ARMAND DE MOLERON SCRIPTS SUPERVISOR CHANTAL PERINCKEN EDITOR VERONIQUE LANGE PRODUCTION MANAGER BERNARD BOLLINGER PRODUCED BY MICHELE AND LAURENT PETIN & JEAN-PAUL RAPPENEAU FILM
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Families

A film by
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SYNOPSIS

Jerome Varenne lives in Shanghai. During a quick trip to Paris, he learns that his childhood home in the village of Ambray is at the center of a local conflict. He heads there to straighten things out. This escapade will change his life forever...



Interview with

Jean-Paul

RAPPENEAU

It's been ten years since you made a film.

Normally, I take five years to make a film, a sort of involuntary quinquennial. I'm never one film ahead; I always start over again from scratch. This time, I let two times five years pass since "Bon Voyage," because in the meantime there was a film that didn't get made, a film I took a long time writing and preparing, which was cancelled for insufficient financing two months before the shoot was due to begin.

It's the first time that's ever happened to me. So I was going through a phase of depression. I understand that the film industry has changed, that the kind of films I loved to make would cost too much today, so I've started looking for simpler subjects.

I thought of a story I used to tell often, though I'd only tell the first part. It's the story of a man who travels to the south of France with a young woman who may be his fiancée, or someone new in his life. They drive down to the French Riviera and on the way there, about halfway, they realize they're not far from the place where he grew up. He says to the woman, "Hey let's go there, I'll take you to see the house I used to live in." He goes there and finds the house. Everything has changed, and in that house lives a young girl.

So you already had a man, two women and a house. What was missing?

Actually, in all the films I've made, I've always started out with a really strong hook. In "A Matter of Resistance," a secret agent hides in the cellar to plan D-Day. In "The Scoundrel," a man wants to get married in the United States, but we find out he's already married in France. Things take off fast right from the start.

In this case, after the sad experience of having a film cancelled, I thought, "Why start out with a big bang? Why not begin gently instead? I met Jacques Fieschi and talked to him about a few ideas, and when I told him that story about the house, he stopped short: "Hey that one's pretty good." "Yeah sure, but what happens next?" "You'll see, but it's already pretty good."

And that house became your house.

It wasn't long before I said to myself, "Okay, the time has come: stop beating around the bush. It's time to go back out to the provinces where I was born and lived for eighteen years, until I left to study in Paris." But when I went back, the house I lived in no longer existed. There was a park, but the trees had been chopped down. Instead, there was a cement block, a monolith that looked as if it had fallen from the sky, like in a Kubrick movie. An apartment building! And yet, around it nothing had changed; the old historical district was the same. I like that a lot, because the house still exists, but only in my head. It's like it's untouchable. I have everything in my memory. I know how many steps you have to go up to get upstairs, how long the hallway on the right is. That's what guided us when we were scouting, actually. When we were looking for the house, I could look at a location and say, "That's it!"

There was that idea of going back home.

Exactly. It's an idea that haunts many filmmakers. Bertrand Tavernier, in his very first film, returns to Lyon, the city where he was born. Arnaud Desplechin went back to Roubaix again with "My Golden Years." And Tim Burton went back to the Los Angeles suburb of Burbank, where he was born, for "Edward Scissorhands." He said, "You can go wherever you want, but the place where you grew up never leaves you." That's what I kept saying to my co-writers, Julien, my son and Philippe Le Guay, who came on board later.

Actually, there have always been houses in my films. In "A Matter of Resistance," the house became a manor house. And why did I make "Le Sauvage"? Because there was a wooden house with a dock out on an island where a man had gone away to live alone. In "All Fired Up," I imagined an old casino on the edge of Lake Geneva that didn't exist. This time, the idea was to shoot a sort of imaginary autobiography, since everything about the story being told comes from me, but nothing comes from my real life. Actually, if you really search, you can find things that match up, of course, but there are also things that happen in other families, or relate to other families.

So it's inspired by, but not based on?

Yes, it's an imaginary family novel. But I wanted the city to be imaginary, too. That's why we shot in several different locations; it's a mix. When I go back to the city where I was born, I have a hard time recognizing it; I go through these endless commercial zones and I see these towers that surround the city, up on the hills, like the one where

Gilles Lellouche lives in the film. We had the idea of showing the France of today mixed with the France of yesterday. A province straight out of the fifties plunged into the great waters of globalization. The young man who comes back has been living elsewhere for a long time, in China. He lives with a brilliant young Chinese woman from a rural background who graduated top of her class at the Peking Institute of Technology, then moved to Shanghai, where she met Jérôme. They create a startup together and come to Europe to sign an agreement with a big British group. All of that is just suggested in the film, not really explained, but everything is real. The world floats around that small city. Modern methods of communication play their role. When Bertrand Tavernier saw the film, he said: "It's the first use of the cell phone like Georges Feydeau would have done it!" As we progressed in the writing, I could tell the story wasn't going to take off fast, like I mentioned earlier; that we would actually be moving gradually into situations layer by layer; and through them the situations would become the plot. That was what interested me - that was the challenge. Not to jump right into a slapstick comedy, but move into a world where you are gradually caught up in the network of threads woven between characters. We discover them, one after the other, with their lives, desires and downfalls. And in the end, musically, we move towards something that represents the film's climax, in the music festival for Schumann's Concerto No. 1. With this finale, we are right on the edge of opera, which I love so much.

It begins with chamber music and ends with a large orchestra.

Yes, that space opens up little by little. And I like the fact that we don't really know where we're going, that we're left waiting, instead of having the subject shouted out at us. That allows us to get closer to life and emotions, expanding to the point where emotions submerge everything. In the scenes, each one has its own color, funniness or question, but as we get a sense of the scene and then start to get into it, at the same time we unconsciously know that behind it another story is developing - the story of the film. In the end, each scene is just a piece of the puzzle. We look at each piece of the puzzle knowing that a bigger picture is being put together for us. And here in this film what I liked was that, for a while, we don't know where we are heading, what the puzzle's big picture will be. It's an impressionist film; the direction is more musical, I think. No storming of the Bastille, no attack from the Atlantic front - but gentler and more engaging things, I hope.

You left more space for emotion?

When we shot the film, it became funnier as well as more moving than what I had initially imagined. What I really like about the story is that these "Families-in-law" are plural. There is one family, of course, but most of all, a second family. And let me tell you, in the city where I was born, all everyone ever talked about were those kind of stories. The people who have seen the film and know the city said to me, "Oh, that reminds me of that story about...?" "Oh yeah, that's it!" I have to say it was great fun for me to write, because I was on home territory. All of it - I knew it all! The characters all resemble people I knew. Their little and big adventures, I know they happened to a certain person, to me or others. We weren't looking to invent absolutely everything.

Your hero is elusive. How did you make a slippery eel into such a romantic character?

I've wanted to work with Mathieu Amalric for a long time, and when I started to think about the character, I knew the time had come. Because he can express a thought through his presence alone, a thought in movement. It didn't take long for me to realize that he really represented me. You say "eel," and there is some of that in the character; in any case there is one thing that belongs to me, which is I can be in a great hurry and very agitated, and at the same time I can be in a total state of calm waiting, like a hare in tall grass that doesn't move until he hears the hunters move away. So that combination of speed and thoughtfulness, of slowness even, is like me. That's what Mathieu expresses so magnificently. But of course he wasn't fooled. As soon as he read the script, he said to me, "You're finally talking about yourself!"

Did that contribute to your sense of peace on the shoot - the feeling like you were in your own element?

It's true, I've never been as happy on a shoot as I was on this one. I had no fear, I was familiar with everything and I was at home, with an extraordinary crew, and maybe the fact that everybody knew it had been ten years since I'd been on a set made everyone want to help me make a comeback, yes! Beginning with my producers,

who became my friends; they had already helped me out with "Bon Voyage," which nearly didn't get made, and then came back again this time to save Soldier Rappeneau and his film! And then the actors, who rallied around me like a new family. I adore them all. Marine, Karin, Nicole, Gemma, Claude Perron and Mathieu; and Guillaume and André Dussollier, who I'd always dreamed of working with; and Jean Marie Winling, who I'd already worked with on "Cyrano," and Gilles Lellouche, who I think is extraordinary in the role of promoter Grégoire Piaggi, the prince of the region. In his stylish moments, he often made me think of Yves Montand. And yet, he can also be a man who suffers, and in that suffering he is overwhelmingly moving.

Let's talk about Marine Vacth, who you cast as soon as you met her.

I didn't know her; I'd seen François Ozon's film, and of course I knew she was a rare beauty. One day, she came to see me. She sat down across from me. She was very pregnant, and depending on the way she moved on the sofa, she moved her belly to the right or the left with both of her hands. There she was, and I saw right away that it was her, Louise, the character in my film! She is very beautiful and very lively, but above all she has a mystery about her; you can already see that in Ozon's film. There is something undefinable that lingers, you can't tell what. That mystery is part of the mystery of great actresses, and she's already got it.

Did she adapt quickly to your legendary tempo?

It's true that I pay close attention to tempo - to rhythm. A film is like a spring that you compress and release, and you can't lose the tension or let the film drag on like a sail that flaps against the mast when the wind dies down. That's when everything can go to hell. Getting to the point where you can work on rhythm this way is very long and very complicated, and all of it is to attain a sort of grace. Romain Gary used to say, "Grace is movement." I like characters to be in movement, as soon as things aren't moving anymore I get worried, but at the same time, you can't let that show.

Patrick Modiano, who I wrote "Bon Voyage" with, used to say, "It's your invisible crimp." That's a jeweler's term; with certain stones, you shouldn't be able to see how they are mounted. All I want people to see in a scene are the feelings it expresses.

Our dear Gérard Depardieu made the comment, like all actors have with me, that I sway during their dialogue, because I move with the rhythm of their lines; since there is movement, it's just as well that the director is on the move too. That really bothers some actors, but Gérard liked it a lot. One day on "Cyrano" he launched into a long tirade, then all of a sudden, stopped short. "Is something wrong?" I thought he was feeling sick, but he says, "No, it's you - you've stopped moving!" Actually, he had forgotten a line, and that'd made me stop short; he saw it right away.

You work a lot on laying out the scene structure before you start shooting.

Directing is, after all, the art of directing characters within a space. And that space is first a location, a set - and until I've found that location, the scene doesn't exist. Next, once I have all the sets and the floorplans and models, once I know the locations and have walked around in them front to back and side to side, once I know the distance between the walls, doors and windows, then I take on that very unique task of blocking. For me, that's when the film is made.

I do this work with my script supervisor. For a long time, it was my sister Elisabeth; now I do it with Chantal Pernecker, a film technician second to none.

We lock ourselves up in my office for several weeks and work out the blocking. For me that consists of inventing and imagining the movement in those spaces I know perfectly well, down to the last centimeter.

So I act out the scenes in front of Chantal. I enter, move around and speak. She is the film's first audience. "But how can you see the...? Maybe there's a mirror?" Ah, yes - a mirror - wait." And I sketch out the shot with the mirror. And little by little, the film takes form, image by image, with the actors' movements as well. I remember my sister Elisabeth, when we were working out the structure for "Cyrano" - she was laying on the rug and saying, "I've had enough playing Cyrano's death!" I would push her, "Wait just one more second, I'm seeing if I need a tracking shot." "Yeah, but my back is killing me!"

Working out the scene structure allows you to see if the movements feel real, because when it comes down to it we're working for the actors; the actors are the ones who make the film, who give it its flesh and blood. So in order for them to do a good job and feel comfortable, they have to feel real. And movement expresses feelings

better than words.

For example, in the film, Marine Vacth uses a secret entrance to let Mathieu Amalric into the house that was the childhood home for both of them, in different eras. Everything has been abandoned - it's desolate. He turns to her and stretches out her arms, and she stretches out her arms, too. They're expressing all the nostalgia of their memories there, without a single word.

This is the first time your son Martin has composed the music.

Music is the only department where a guy like me, who becomes a little like the walking movie, a guy who takes care of everything, even the size of the candles and how to place the dinner rolls on the table, is going to hand over the keys to another artist: the musician! For me and many others, the suspense is incredible: what is he going to come up with for us?

This time I brought Martin on board, who has a grand gift for melody. At his request, we had a piano brought into my office. He came in every week and played themes for me. I liked some of them, others not so well, those he immediately set aside. He returned to the first choices and changed and improved them right in front of me. No ego wars, no self-centeredness. We've always been on the same wavelength. We moved forward together, which is such a rare thing. And the recording session in London was a great moment of joy - for father and son!

Is it true that you love the editing stage?

It's a happy time for me. The risks are all gone. You don't have to run against the clock anymore. If you don't finish today, you can pick it up tomorrow. When you're shooting, on the other hand, you're constantly checking the time! Even though the resolutions I made after we stopped working on the film that never got shot motivated me to choose a subject that would be easier to shoot and less stressful to make, I was determined to do one thing: make the world and globalization present on screen. My producers understood that. Thanks to them, Shanghai, London and Zanzibar are in the film; we really shot there!

Véronique Lange did the first edit according to the scene structure plan. I joined her once shooting was over; and that's when we allowed ourselves to change the order around. Just a bit. Véronique was my friend Claude Miller's editor; and we got along famously. She has great sensitivity, a lot of finesse, and a contagious laugh.

When you watch the finished film, does it make you learn anything about yourself?

I'll have to think that over; it's still too early to say! For a long time now I've wanted to make a love story that develops in strange ways. But out of modesty, I never made it. And now here it is - it just showed up, and I'm happy about that.

FILMOGRAPHY

Jean-Paul
Rappeneau

Bon Voyage.....2003

The Horseman on the Roof.....1995

french title : *Le Hussard sur le toit*

Cyrano de Bergerac.....1990

All Fired Up.....1982

french title : *Tout feu, tout flamme*

Lovers Like Us (Call Me Savage).....1975

french title : *Le Sauvage*

The Married Couple of the Year Two.....1971

french title : *Les Mariés de l'An Deux*

The Good Life.....1966

french title : *La Vie de château*



Interview with

Mathieu

AMALRIC

What struck you most when you read the script?

The speed! Jérôme Varenne is a man who is always on the move. This story actually shouldn't even have happened. The first time he meets Louise, he goes in one direction; she runs after him and says, "No, it's not that way, it's on the other side." That could sum up the film. Jean-Paul Rappeneau does a marvelous job of making films about people who aren't aware of what is happening to them. I get the impression that for him, life is full of surprises, and that moment when you make a life-changing decision is driven by an inner will we aren't conscious of. So as an actor, you don't want to play someone who is too self-aware. Things happen before the character has time to realize what's going on.

Is that what creates ambiguity?

Ambiguity and melancholy too, which Rappeneau handles with a polite form of despair. It's very ambiguous, because everything gradually gets more complex as the story develops. His father must have been a total jerk - or did Jérôme make that story up in his head? Little by little, it gets a lot more human and a lot more complicated. And I realized when I was learning my lines that Jérôme doesn't actually say much; he often just repeats what other people say. He's a bit of a slippery eel. The type who avoids commitment. He never really says what he thinks.

But is he aware of that? He's a bit of a slippery eel towards himself as well.

Yes, that's true! He voluntarily didn't make the effort of trying to understand what motivated him to run away from his family. But with Rappeneau, all that is treated through adventure, action, fun and attraction, that something that draws you in like a magnet, that makes it so you can't leave, but you don't know why, you can't explain it. He doesn't like to explain things. For Jean-Paul, fate is random, but he doesn't make it into a tragedy. On the contrary! It happens through insignificant little things, surprises - and it can happen through an object, - in this case, the mother's vanity desk. So this thing of Jean-Paul's that is so irresistible is that there's no controlling anything.

But Jean-Paul himself controls the way his film is made with absolute precision.

Yes, that's what's paradoxical about him. Everything is very precise in his head; it's a tempo, a rhythm, it's a very sensitive sort of control, like a musician. That's why sound is very important to him. Even in the script, you have things written out like, vroom, bing, bang! And I don't know how he does it when I watch the films he's made, how he captures the profound nature of the actors he films, because in reality, we're puppets; on a daily basis, in our work, we totally let ourselves go to his personal tempo.

Did you know it would be like that when you met him?

I knew about the musicality, the tempo and the rhythm, because I had seen a lot of bonuses and read books in which he talked about the way he works. That said, I didn't expect it to be so structured; for example, that he didn't even need to run through an entire scene. We shot by angle, so it's entirely possible that you'll do two lines from the beginning of a sequence, then do three others that are at the end, and then another day you have to fill in the gap between them and remember the way you did it in the proceeding shot. But he's already imagined the whole thing and thought it all through, and that's when you see how good he is at always landing on his feet.

Did he talk to you about the story?

Not much. When he gave me the script over a year ago, he suggested it was something personal, especially the fact of having missed his father. And sometimes I felt, as we were filming them, that certain shots were deeply moving to him, that they were painful to him. But what's beautiful about Jean-Paul is that he turns all that into a story to show to the whole world.

How did you get into character?

Through the script. I read the script. I read and re-read it. Later, Jean-Paul gave the whole team his scene breakdown, which was loaded with directions. With Jean-Paul, psychological elements are expressed through details: through body language or a "vrooom," and in the way it's filmed and the moment he cuts away. So after that, I referred only to the scene breakdown to get synchronized. And it was a very lovely thing to see all the actors gradually discover that synchronicity. We all got disoriented, because everything you need to make things uncomfortable for an actor was right there.

What do you mean?

Well, an actor who thinks of himself as an actor; who wants to do a run through to create places for himself where he can be inventive within a scene, all that's unnecessary - Jean-Paul has already done all that. The reality is, that when he's making his film all on his own and playing out all the characters, and in a scene, for example, you have my character who is wondering, and wants to ask a question but doesn't dare ask it, that doesn't interest Jean-Paul - it bores him. So he'll create movement - clang, clang, have some cars and a truck pass by, and that's it - you move on to something else, because my character didn't have the time to speak anyway; and once again, he finds a possibility for escape.

Is it tiring to act that way?

It's physically exhausting to do, because you say four or maybe five lines max, and then you're cut! Jean-Paul cuts in the middle of a shot! I found a metaphor, sorry but it's really the feeling you get: it's like you're living a constant "coïtus interruptus!" So your nervous system is always on alert, which is really, really great for the intensity of each shot. That's why actors are so engaging in his films - you can never let go. The characters never rest. That made me realize that a scene breakdown can be used as a hidden tool to manage the characters' psychology. It's a huge gray area that I haven't really been able to explore yet when I direct.

Were you worried that he chose an actress with so little screen experience for the film's lead female role?

On the contrary, it was incredibly inspiring to act with Marine. She's a person like me, in that she doesn't know technique, she never learned it; so that makes you fragile and I think as a result, it'll have a certain charm that will hook people in more mysterious places. Marine is a woman who isn't aware of her beauty, it's pretty overwhelming in her case, as it often is with very beautiful women. And Louise, like all women in Rappeneau's films, has a wild side. The heroine is the one who provokes. The man hides and the woman reveals him.

You'd crossed paths with Gilles Lellouche, but never actually played in a scene with him.

We met once during a film promotion and said how nice it would be to do something together. And the fact that we're basically nothing alike works really, really well. You gotta admit, the character of Grégoire really gets hit hard, and Gilles pulls it off in a pretty moving way, I think.

Do you find family issues moving?

For me, they always make me imagine tragic things, but in Jean-Paul's film, they're like needles that come to happily take a poke at life. For Jean-Paul, life is beautiful, but sometimes there are those things that make me think of the feelings you get in Wes Anderson's films, when you think everything is fine and then all of a sudden, bam, things underneath are pretty bad, but it's hardly even noticeable. Things are always in movement. There is no cult of nostalgia with Jean-Paul.

No nostalgia, but there's melancholy.

What's beautiful in Rappeneau's films is that feeling of lightness; and yet they are films you think back upon again and again. But he's not nostalgic, that's true. Jean-Paul never says, "Things used to be better." He doesn't film that.

He films human beings in their era, in their time, in their present, like insects that slam against windows, tap, tap, tap, and that's what touches him. He never judges.

How does he get the whole team in tune with him?

It's because he's possessed; he is filled with this whole film he's made up in his head. He shows up with so many ideas! Right away we all felt like Jean-Paul was using a grammar we didn't know. We felt like we couldn't work like we usually do, so that was enthralling. And an actor has got to be just a wheel in the film's clockwork. Jean-Paul strips you of all your acting tricks, and yet, you've still got to be really good technically. For me, technically means the only thing I believe in: you've got to be very skillful in films, skillful with your hands. That comes from the circus, from comedy. You've got to have tempo.

Do you feel like Jean-Paul's alter ego?

It's amusing to me to see Jean-Paul like the narrator of "The Red and the Black," inventing his idealized Julien, unbearable, a failure, the man he should have been, everything Jean-Paul never did in his own life, everything he should have done, and that's also why he makes films. It's always really interesting to see lives that may seem to be conventional and unobtrusive, and the craziness of films. Filmmakers often need to have a very regular life to create crazy things. Jean-Paul doesn't feel adventurous enough in life. So I'd say Jérôme is Jean-Paul's fantasy.

We didn't talk about the love story.

No time! In Jean-Paul's films, as soon as love is there, we escape. That's the way it is in all his films, except for "Cyrano" of course. For love to remain that drug, that faith, he never shows it during the film. That way the audience can take it away.



Interview with
Marine
VACTH

How would you describe Louise, your character?

She is a young woman who is lively and clever, but also wounded, simple, frank and sometimes elusive, a bit mysterious.

Does Louise resemble the other female leads in Jean-Paul Rappeneau's films?

Yes, because they're always on the move - a little annoying, but endearing and touching. Louise is like that, but it seems to me she's a little more reserved, more mysterious, more serious. While remaining light and full of joy, of course.

She lives with a man she's not in love with.

I think she feels indebted to Grégoire, who helped her and her mother; who gave them a place to live, took care of them and promised to get back the house they lived in so happily for many years. She is with him out of gratitude, but also because he is a likeable man, nice, good and sweet; but the life she shares with him lacks a feeling of true love. She has stayed because she loves her mother; otherwise she would have left long ago. Until the arrival of Jérôme, who she doesn't know, but thinks she hates.

And yet, they are attracted to each other.

I think there's something inevitable between them; things happen that way sometimes between a man and a woman, and you don't know why. And there's the father, who is a bond between them, who was her heaven and his hell.

You seemed very happy on the shoot.

That's thanks to Jean-Paul. He makes you feel loved and protected, too. He is attentive to us, he makes sure we feel okay, and then we want him to be happy too, because his heart is so much in it - he's really like a child. There is a sort of childlike expectation about him; he is really the first audience of his own film, and yet he is with us - he's completely with his actors. He is funny and impatient - the atmosphere at work was full of joy. I felt like I was surrounded by affection and very pampered. Jean-Paul has a teenager's enthusiasm, and it's very contagious.

Do you remember when you first met Jean-Paul?

It was in the production offices - we chatted. It was just to meet, but I was immediately moved by him, by his timidity and kindness. I also have a hard time being concise and finishing my sentences, putting my thoughts into precise words. So I felt close to that, close to him, when I discovered the contrast between his hesitation when he speaks and the extreme precision that's in his head. We do what is written and he knows where the camera will be, and everything is already very precise, it's pretty remarkable! What is destabilizing in the beginning is the fact that a sequence can be broken down into maybe thirteen or fourteen shots, and yet he manages to keep it absolutely believable.

How would you define the way he directs you?

It's something precise and musical. He has written a score and you can't let a single note end up different, because then it's no longer what he imagined and that really upsets him. So I had to be extremely rigorous about my lines and be in movement almost all the time. He likes it when we are moving or running. But I like it - I think it punctuates the dialogue and gives it rhythm. It can carry a scene.

Is this your first experience with an ensemble film?

Yes, and everyone really has an important place in the film. Each one of the characters is important and they all play off each other. For me, it's like everyone has the lead role in this movie. We all depend upon each other. Jérôme, who's played by Mathieu, is the one we follow, and through him we discover the others, but they're all significant.

Is "Families" a comedy?

It's a very funny film, very sweet and poetic. It's a moving film, and then the humor catches up to you. It's a Rappeneau film, so there is a certain lightness that gives it depth, joy and emotion.



Interview with

Gilles

LELLOUCHE

What did you think of the script for “Families” the first time you read it?

Actually, it's a script that needs to be read several times. On the first reading, it seems to relate a family chronicle with an added love triangle. But it's much deeper and more subtle than that. What really took me in was that subtlety in the writing, that design that ties the characters together. It's Jean Paul's trademark, this belief in the powers of love, actually, which is the cornerstone of his work and career; and you can see it in this film - it's a mix of feelings and desires and you never know where they are going to take you. The central character played by Mathieu is a sort of troublemaker who's always on the move, who never really answers questions, who is right up front, and then comes and goes, and the characters are all around him, pretty much trying to save their own skins in situations that are always a bit ahead of them. For me, what really took me in was to rediscover real French filmmaking in the noblest sense of the term. I don't think we have a lot of scripts that are as detailed and subtle as the script for “Families”. As for what it was about my character that made me want to do the film, I think it's hard to find a more beautiful cinematic role than playing a character who is in love but isn't loved in return.

Describe Grégoire, your character.

He is a very talkative person; he lives in the moment. He's not an intellectual, he's instinctive and sentimental, a true romantic in love. I think he is on an intense professional quest, he is very ambitious, but the determining factor in his life is his love for Louise -that's what I really liked. I think Jean-Paul allowed me to experiment with situations that I'd never really delved into before, and it was a huge pleasure to do those scenes.

By things you'd never delved into before, do you mean the emotions beneath the surface of his talkative nature?

Yes. For example, there's that scene where I come to talk to Mathieu and the conversation makes you think I'm talking about the real estate transaction, that I'm unhappy because he went and talked to the notary, when actually it's a pretext for unloading my jealousy, because my character Grégoire senses that Louise is attracted to Mathieu's character. Grégoire guesses that an intimacy is growing between them, so that scene is a pretext for conveying jealousy, and it's just like life. Often we don't say the words we mean, we take side routes - it's the motivation that matters. And in Jean-Paul's films and in this script, there is a lot of that. To be really honest, I think movies today tend to sacrifice the psychology of their characters. Meaning that we get straight to the point; we have a psychology that comes close to a comic strip mentality. We live in an era of immediacy where you have to understand things really fast, and we don't leave the audience the time to think about things. But here we have a film that's much more subtle than that, much lighter and dynamic; for me, it's an idealized version of life

Grégoire is also a very talented businessman.

Yes, he represents the totally self-made-man. When you look at Grégoire and then at Jérôme, you see two totally different upbringings. Jérôme has had an intellectual education, a life of discretion and comfort. He comes from an upper-class family, with all the traditions that implies. And Gregory is just the opposite; he is down to earth. I think he comes from a family of much more modest resources and has a bit of revenge to take on life. He lives a cliché of success, meaning he has a beautiful wife, an SUV and a big apartment. All he needs is a labrador, and he'd have the full set. But he is totally sincere. And jealous.

Does Rappeneau correspond to the man you'd imagined him to be?

I remember having seen an advance screening of “The Horseman on the Roof,” and I noticed Jean-Paul there with his suit jacket and scarf looking very poised in the middle of the room; he must have been accompanied by family and people who worked with him, and he seemed to me like a statue, not austere, but almost. I thought to myself, “He represents French filmmaking in all its splendor,” and of course I looked upon him with enormous respect and deference. But I was a thousand leagues away from imagining the man he really is! He is so far, far away from that static pose I had put him in despite himself. Because he is a guy with absolutely delirious energy and incredible enthusiasm, and above all, he never fakes it. He is actually one of the rare directors you could call interactive! When he's happy, everybody knows it. He has a sort of little tent with a camera monitor and when he is satisfied, or even during a take, you can see the whole tent move, when you're lucky enough to not hear him talk, because

sometimes he'll say, "It's great! It's fantastic!" He is extremely enthusiastic, extremely lively and extremely warm; he loves to tease and actually is a bit of an adolescent at heart. And there I was expecting to meet a serious and poised gentleman, but he turned out to be kind of the opposite. I worked with a director who wants to make films, who has a love for film, for actors and for his crew that I have rarely seen, and to be honest, there are twenty-five year old directors that don't have a tenth of the energy he has. He gets up and walks over, gives you directions, goes back and looks around: "Where's my headset?" He is anxious, he is totally committed every day and every minute, and it's an incredible joy to work with him.

Isn't he also extremely demanding?

Of course he is demanding. Actually, having met him two or three times before the film, I saw how very, very meticulous he was and how extremely precise he was about his script and dialogue. We had a few work sessions on the text and I immediately realized that if I had changes to suggest I had best do it before the shoot. He is the type that sees things through to the very end; like all perfectionists, he has huge doubts and you can't just unhinge all the preproduction work that's already been done by questioning him on the shoot, you have to bring up the issue beforehand. So one day I came with some suggestions of words to add or delete. I told him about my changes, and sometimes he agreed, and other times he didn't, but what was great was to see him think about it; sometimes it took fifteen minutes for him to answer with a "yes," a "but," or an expletive. Because he is very, very, very scrupulous and concerned about the music he has in his head; and that music, that rhythm which belongs to him alone, he has to find it. Jean-Paul is also an extremely anxious person. But he's not one of those unbearable anxious people who dumps his suffering, anguish and worries on you - no way! He's a man of action and always full of joy. But still, you've got to pay very close attention to the music in his head, because come what may he's the director of the orchestra, and an excellent one at that, so you've got to try to tune in to that rhythm.

When he is demanding on the set, how does that show up?

Not in the number of takes he does, in any case. I am stunned by how few takes we manage to do. When he has what he wants, we can stop at three takes. Even though we have scenes that can get pretty difficult. But there is so much preproduction beforehand that we are all aligned on the music we're going to be playing. We've agreed upon a common language and we all speak it on the set. When Jean-Paul is demanding, it's in the way words are articulated, or at least as far as I'm concerned; every word has to be heard. I tend to talk pretty fast and slur my words a little. But no, with him they have to be audible, natural, connected and open. He doesn't want a single word to be forgotten, not even a "yes" or an "r." He is absolutely exacting, and yet on the other hand I find him to be open to suggestions; even if it troubles him, he listens, whether it's his actors, his crew, his DP, cameraman or script supervisor. Everyone has the right to participate - it's really teamwork. With the films he's made, you could imagine Jean-Paul like a king in his kingdom, but no - he likes to share and it's the best idea that wins, even though it may put a twist in his internal music.

Did he talk to you about the personal aspects of the script?

I think it's the most intimate film he's ever made. I didn't go so far as to ask him if the story was something that happened to him, because Jean-Paul is quite modest, he's not the kind who spills his guts. He explained to me that certain scenes were more or less based on his experiences. He especially talked to me about the scene when I burst into Mathieu's hotel room looking for Louise and empty all the little bottles from the minibar. That scene echoes an experience he had with Gérard Depardieu while shooting "Cyrano," which is what inspired it.

You'd never worked with Mathieu Amalric before.

No. I think he's a tremendous actor, atypical and rare: there aren't two of him around! I like his ideals as a director and I like him as an actor; I find him extremely meticulous in his choices, and God only knows if we aren't somehow related, because you could put me in the category of "popular" movies and him in "independent" films, but the fact that Jean-Paul brought us together is a fantastic example for French filmmaking to follow, when a director decides to break with conventions and not categorize actors, but instead mixes it all up. Mathieu and I were very happy to work together, and I think you'll be able to feel that in the film.

Wasn't this the second time that you were in love with Marine Vacth?

That's right, this was my second time being her suitor. In "My Piece of the Pie," which was her debut film, I played a pretty raunchy trader who picked up on her and did a whole number on her but didn't succeed and then became absolutely hideous. And this time it's different, I'm very much in love with her, but I still kind of make her suffer - I'm not always all that nice to her this time, either. I think Marine is an exceptional actress. She is totally whole; she has no ticks and no methods, that's what is so great, and I hope she'll stay that way as long as possible. She has a rare authenticity in her gaze and in her acting, which is troubling for an actress her age. I think she's going to have a huge career. I hope she will, anyway.

Did the character of Grégoire teach you anything about yourself as an actor?

I've often been confronted with jealousy in my life - it's been a dreaded enemy, a ball and chain that I've dragged around. I've succeeded in getting rid of it today. This film plunged me back into how atrocious jealousy can be, the absolute hell you find yourself in, the helplessness when you suddenly can't find the words and there's nothing left but a gush of bitter anger, when of a sudden you're dispossessed. There's something in this character that allowed me to say goodbye to that enemy, as if I shook his hand and said, "Are we all good now? Have we called a truce? Are you going to leave me in peace?" And that's that.



Interview with
Nicole
GARCIA

Have you ever worked with Jean-Paul Rappeneau?

No! And what made me want to do this film more than anything was Jean-Paul. I wanted to witness his filmmaking first hand, see that energy he puts into his shots, that way he directs actors which is so unique, pushing actors into an energy, yet interrupting them. That's his way of making sure the scenes are totally driven, that way he has of thwarting us and cutting us off just when it would have felt right to do a few lines more. That limitation is what harnesses the energy you feel when you watch his films; it's not easy for an actor when you're shooting.

Because it requires constant energy for just ten seconds?

It simply requires you to be constantly on alert, to fully accept that cut that comes right when you were ready to do three or four more lines all at once. It implies accepting that you'll have to shoot according to a preexisting scene breakdown and that you're going to have to fit into that like a peg fits into a hole.

How do you find your freedom despite those limitations?

Above all, you can't look for it! You find it, but it's a little bit like honeycomb in a beehive, you find it in the little hole you've been authorized to move around in, and the way everything else goes, you leave that to him. I think I'm going to be surprised when I see the film! I don't even really know what we did. I don't know if the blind spot is in him or on the actors' side, but there's a blind spot in the results, it's like the second surprise in the beauty of shooting with Jean-Paul Rappeneau.

Tell us about the character of Suzanne.

She is hard to define. I think the life she's led has driven her a bit crazy. She was in love with her husband, and had two kids while they were married; she left Paris and then they broke up. She came back to Paris with her sons, she had the courage to do that and raise them as a single mother. But all those blows made her fragile. She is an incurable romantic, but now she devotes her love to her sons, maybe more to Jérôme than Jean-Michel, since we tend to favor the one who leaves and is far away. But I find her very moving. And she has kept her punch, her appetite, her wonder and curiosity which are childlike qualities.

Is she funny, too?

She's funny without knowing it! She's funny in her surprises, in her naiveté, in a sort of frankness that isn't entirely appropriate for her age. She's funny in her excesses, yes - and her obsessions, too. She wants to get a piece of furniture back from the family home, her little vanity desk, which is pretty nice, actually. We don't know why she is so attached to that object, but that's part of her madness.

She seems to have a very authoritarian relationship with her son Jean-Michel.

Of her two sons, he is the one who has stayed with her and taken care of her in every way, financially as well - the one who supports her. So like everybody, she has a sort of ingratitude towards the person who is the most generous with her, and she also has something to dream about with the one who has gone away and doesn't keep in touch with her very often. So that's the injustice and the ingratitude at play. Jean-Paul sees right through the family, into what lies beneath appearances, into the greatest stories of love and betrayal, like a bed of neuroses we see growing in each member of the family; we can tell Jean-Paul knows what he's talking about, that he enjoys telling the story and does it well. The film is full of wit, but it also has a romantic side, and there is an almost tragic side to the love story, which is the turning point of the film.

When you arrived on the set, you said, "We're really in the provinces!"

Yes, because when I arrived from Paris I immediately sensed that smell, that unique thickness of the air, that false feeling of the peace of an afternoon in the provinces, which is worlds away from the feeling you get in the capital city. And the location was very well chosen as well; we were in a French province, and that will be a point of interest and a joy in the film's geography, which includes Shanghai, Paris, this French province and London. The

province really makes its presence felt - that singularity of something that can grow peacefully off on its own.

As a director, what did you think about Rappeneau's directing style?

I think it's common to be very pampered by directors when you're both an actress and a director. You're affected by the life you spend on the set with directors, especially with someone like Jean-Paul. But those are unconscious influences. On the other hand, what astounded me about Jean-Paul was the way he could totally drain a whole production team so entirely at his service, in the best possible way, for the benefit of the film - the actors as well as the technical crew. It's very moving to see, even as an actress, and even if you're not at all used to that kind of direction, to being directed that way, you go with the flow because that's who he is! Because that's who he is, that's who I am, and that's who we are.

Do you think it's his enthusiasm that creates that?

His enthusiasm can't do it all. It's also because in those limits lies the truth of his directing. You just happen upon the truth. And he also has such an amazing ear, and even if that keeps you from saying just one little word differently than planned, which can seem a bit excessive sometimes, you can feel it when you nail a line, and he knows it, and when you don't quite nail it, he hears it - he has absolute pitch when it comes to acting. He makes no mistakes. And that's where he actually lets himself be surprised. If he was here, he'd say, "I'm always letting myself be surprised, Nicole!" It is sometimes true that he isn't expecting anything in particular, and then suddenly something happens that rings truer than the intonation he'd imagined, and he's delighted, and welcomes it fully. There's no rigidity, that's what's so surprising about him. He has completely broken everything down and he's expecting something, with certain intonations, but he is always ready to let himself be overrun by something else with that kind of ambivalence, that paradox, which explains and says a lot about his talent.

How would you summarize "Families"?

It's a very unique story that begins with the story of a house, and you unwind a string and discover the story of a family and then a story of love. Only he could tell a story like that! The theme is fairly classic, in a house in the provinces, and yet something shakes up that classicism, in the flow of desire where everyone contradicts themselves. At a certain moment, it's exactly like a projector with gnats on it. We're there in front of a summer light bulb like a bunch of gnats and mosquitos getting burnt by the many desires we fly by in the film: desires from childhood, desires for a house, for love - all those desires.





Interview with
Karin
VIARD

When you read “Families,” what did you think of the story?

I thought it had a sort of romantic air to it, like in all of his films, which I totally adore; it's extremely modern, but in a relatively classic type of film, and I really love the writing. He writes extremely well; it's very precise. I found it had that specific signature of French film, meaning that it's a character study with class and elegance, with strong moments and a lot of emotion - we are very close to the characters. It's a story about interesting people and there is also a unique vision, there is a style, a sort of flood of locations and characters; it's almost an adventure movie in a house with people who all collide with one another. It was like reading a novel - it was wonderful!

What kind of limitations did you feel in the way he directed?

The thing that surprised me a little was how he'd planned it out to the hilt; he was almost shooting an edit. Obviously after that I suppose things change a little bit, but overall he had his edit in his head, so we shot a pre-edited film, and that's very different. I'm used to shooting with directors who do long takes from one angle, then from another, and then the film gets put together in the editing room, and here it was kind of the opposite. So it's another kind of work, which isn't easy, where you have to be right on target for about twenty seconds. You've really got to know what you're doing and be able to let go, which I kind of enjoyed. It's a way of working I knew nothing about, and I liked it a lot exactly for that reason. And then there is Jean-Paul Rappeneau's enthusiasm, kindness and cinematographic vision, which I adore. I adore that man!

Did you have any trouble with his obsession for every last detail, for every exact word just in the right place?

Personally, I like that. I mean, I don't really like finding the character by making the dialogue my own, I think that's all rubbish, actually. I prefer to make the character my own by absolutely getting into the text, into what is most precise. I sometimes think it's too bad that I have to say this instead of that, and I can talk to the director about it, but generally my work is based on the text, so I have no problem with it at all.

What can you tell me about your character, Florence?

Well Florence shows up after some time has passed, she's someone they've been talking about and I love that - I love it when a character is just talked about for a long time and then you finally see her show up, I love that. She inspires a certain mystery because she is a woman who is assumed to have feelings she doesn't have. Florence is the one everyone points their finger at, she's the gold digger, the one they think is mean and selfish, and she actually turns out to be an incurable romantic. She was head over heels in love with an older man who died suddenly, before he had the time to organize things. So she is outcast and rejected - it's really the provincial life. What's more, she was a nurse who worked with this renowned doctor and she'd managed to seduce him, so you'd think she was manipulative, when actually it's quite the opposite. She is a person who has the elegance to keep that secret to herself. What I mean is, she doesn't cry out injustice - she has a certain dignity. Eventually that will work in her favor, because in the end we realize that she's not the person we thought she was. She is really the one who suffers from provincial life and gossip. She's the one people point their finger at. So I like her a lot; I'd never played that before and I like it!

Marine Vacth plays your daughter.

I'd crossed paths with her on her first film, Cédric Klapisch's "My Piece of the Pie" - she had a really small part. I thought she was very, very beautiful but I didn't really know her. I discovered her as an actress in "Young and Beautiful," I thought she had something unique, a certain mysterious beauty and I really enjoyed her acting in that film. For "Families" I thought, "She's going to have to break out of that indifference because she plays a passionate young woman." Then I saw her acting and I said to myself, "Oh, she's really an actress!" I think she is photogenic and astonishingly beautiful. I am very proud to be her mother; that reflects a little bit back on me!

How did you prepare for the part?

I didn't talk much about it with Jean-Paul; actually, the few times I talked to him, we were in agreement. It's pretty

much a dream role for me. It's not a very difficult part, but I loved the character's mystery and her unique dignity. It could have been played differently, no doubt, but personally that was what interested me and Jean-Paul agreed on the tone we would give her. After that, it had to pass the test of the shoot, I'd say, which means I proposed things and he refined them a bit, but he seemed to be happy.

Is she a romantic character?

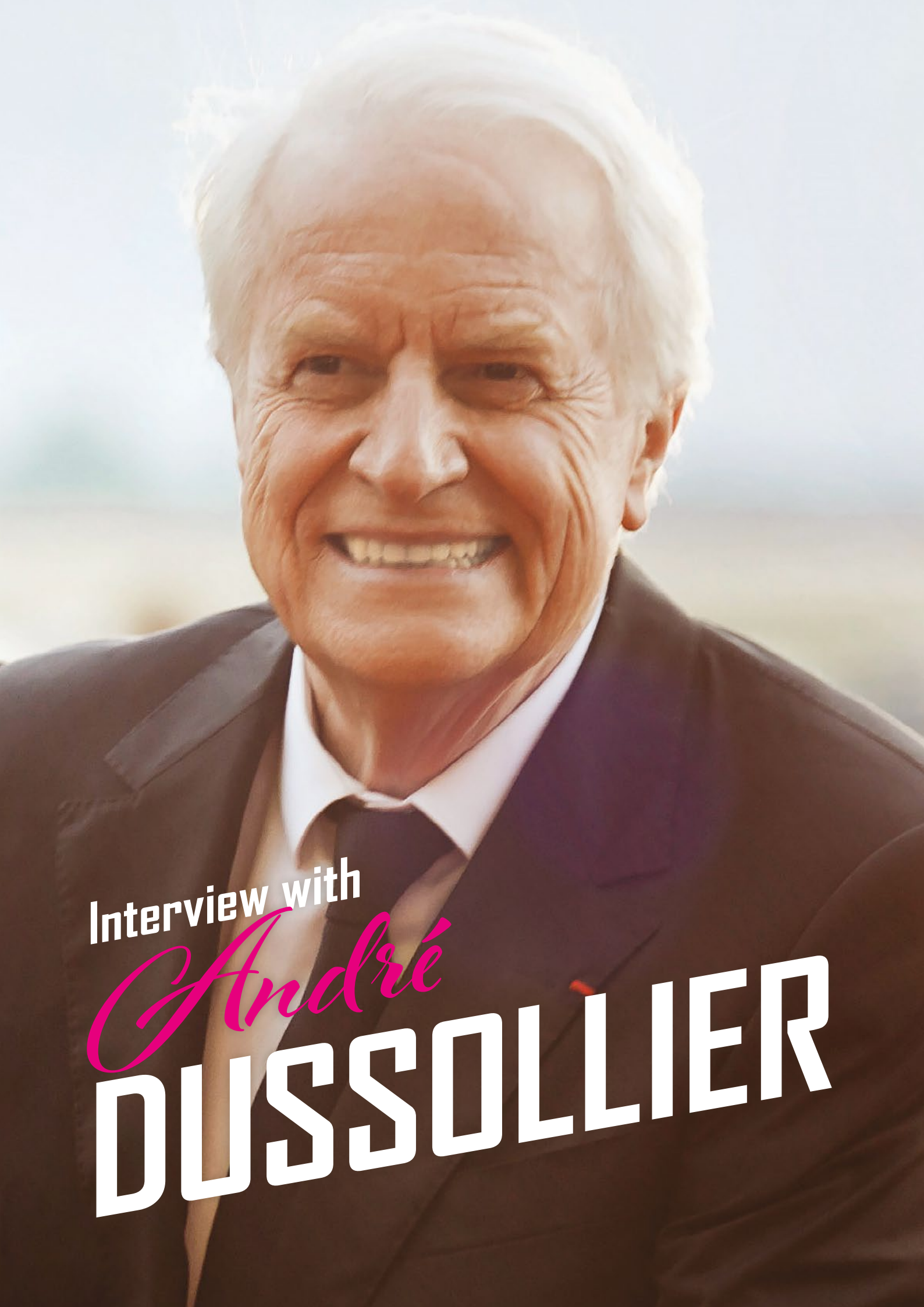
Yes, absolutely, even if it's really a secondary role, but I think she doesn't just serve a function, she's not just there to fill a slot. There is breath in this character; she is an incurable romantic who keeps it to herself, who secretly mourns that man and has to defend the memory of him, which has been tarnished.

Were you at all surprised by the way Jean-Paul behaved on the set?

He is very direct, very frank, and since I'm just the same, it's an operating principle that works well for me. Jean-Paul Rappeneau has integrity, he is straightforward, there is nothing under the rug and I love that. So when he is a bit direct, I don't take it the wrong way, far from it - it actually makes me laugh. And then there is his age to consider as well. What I mean is, I was raised by my grandparents, so I'm familiar with people who are at a certain age and I absolutely adore them because there are a lot of things they no longer bother themselves about; they live in the moment because they don't have a lot of time. That touches me and I love that. I love Jean-Paul's vitality because it comes from who he is as well as from his age.

He came to me the other day and said to me, "Oh it's annoying me, I'm annoying everybody when I didn't want to annoy anybody!" And I told him, "Well it's not a problem for me, I adore you. You can say whatever you want, I adore you!" And it's true.





Interview with

André

DUSSOLLIER

How would you describe your character?

I really represent just a tiny edge of the bigger picture, because I am the Mayor. Obviously the Mayor is well aware of all the issues and is fighting over the house with the heirs, the family and the real estate agent, who is played by Gilles Lellouche. So there is a sort of battle, which as you can imagine, is bitter; it's happening in the provinces, where everybody knows everybody and where personal relations between people have a duality, a second layer of things that can't be said. It's a game of hide-and-seek and a game of masks as well. So, since we're on Jean-Paul Rappeneau's territory, this is a pretext for a comedy, since it's pretty funny to see the situation build like that. And the moment when the whole city is gathered together the night a local festival opens, in the middle of an extraordinary concert, when we are listening in rapture to a magnificent pianist, all of a sudden we get the impression, right in the middle of this idyllic moment, that we're seeing a play by Feydeau, with people slamming doors, even though it's an open-air concert, and that is really pretty funny. I watched all that happen, so it made my character laugh, but it also made me laugh as an actor working for the first time with Jean-Paul Rappeneau.

What's it like to look at a film by Rappeneau from the inside?

It's funny to see him manage the film like the director of an orchestra having prepared things with infinite care, great meticulousness and great precision. He is the director of that orchestra, he knows every word of the dialogue, and above all, every sound. So it's a pleasure, because you're with someone who knows his score by heart. That degree of mastery is pretty rare, because each shot is really always full and rich with all that work he's done in advance, which us actors inherit the moment we start acting. After that, it's up to us to stick to his dream and incarnate the characters he's dreamt of, carefully knitted together and constructed, down to the very last word.

Did you sense a need for constant tension through movement?

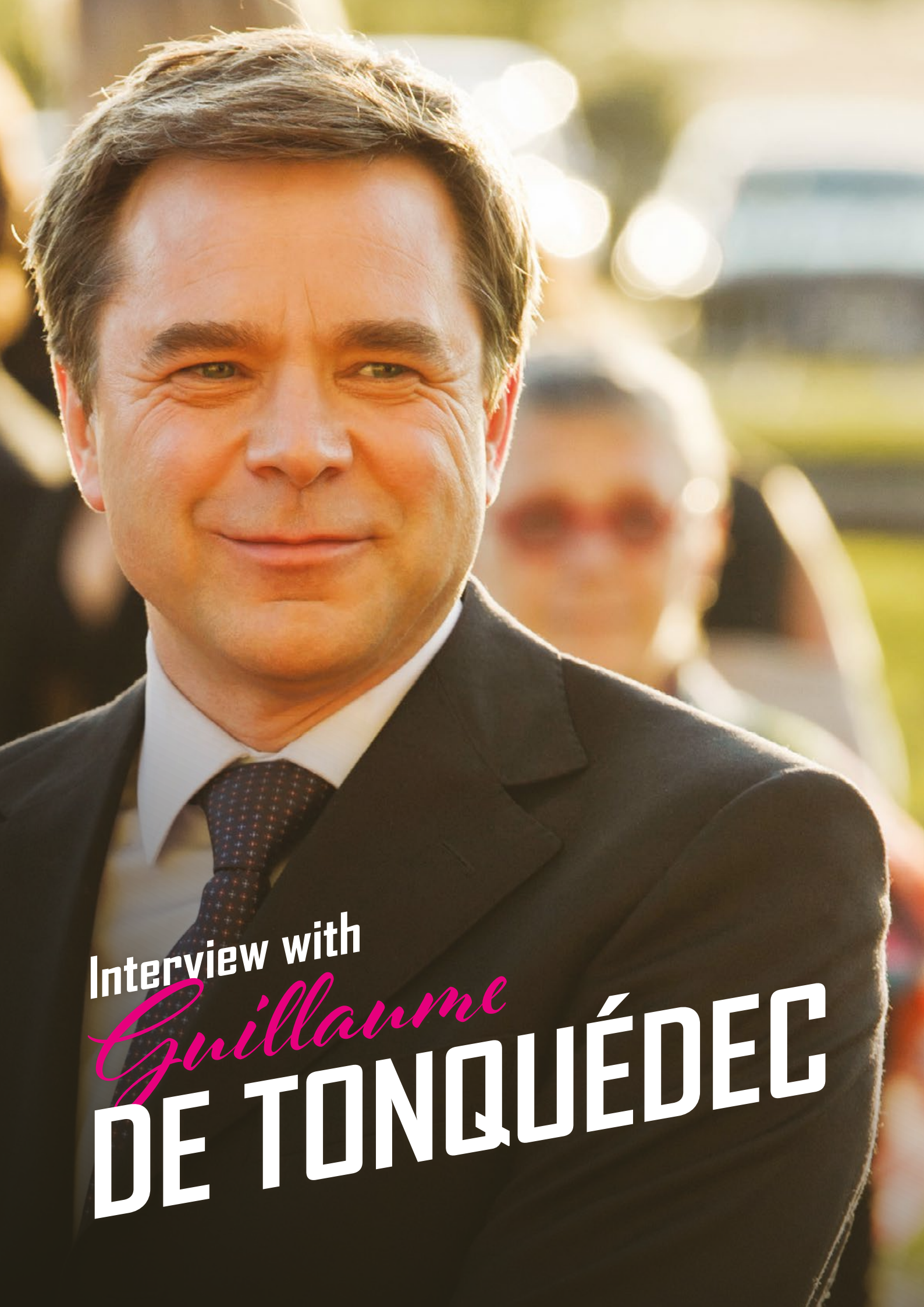
It's psychologically dense because it's a subject that's close to home for him. And yet, he always wants to look at it with a humorous approach, so that gives him the pretext to look at things in close up, as well as seeing things from way up high, like the set up for a comedy scene. So each one of us inherits a precise itinerary and carries a lot of baggage. When I'm playing the Mayor and I welcome for example Mrs. Varenne, who is played by Nicole Garcia, even if it's obviously with just a simple hello, all the old history of their past, which is very personal, is right there. Each character who steps into this story does it in a personal way - it's never insignificant. When it comes time to shoot, everyone has obviously learned their part of the score, but you're face to face with Jean-Paul, who knows it all, right down to the second, and knows precisely all the emotions that need to be felt and all the feelings that have to be conveyed. So it's very enjoyable, because there is a common point that we try to satisfy, and there is the pleasure you get from acting because it's exactly what you dreamt of when you read the script. You act and everything comes to life. I myself have always had the impression of really living things with a lot of truth. "Acting" is investing yourself in something and living something truly. And Jean-Paul encourages that.

Did he tell you if you were playing the part of someone who was close to him?

I think Mathieu is the one who plays a character who resembles the person Jean-Paul is. That's how I read and interpreted the story. I play a Mayor whom Jean-Paul must have known, a representative with an official function in that place where all those family issues play out, and which really concern the whole city because this very visible family is at the heart of its inheritance issues and disputes. So everybody is fighting: the heirs, the children in the family, and also the Mayor, who has designs on that house and its land; but there's also the real estate agent, who wants to do other things with it for other reasons. I come from the provinces, and I recognize provincial life with its whole web of tangled-up strings that keep all the protagonists in a narrow perimeter where everybody knows everybody else. As a result, it's pretty funny and pretty explosive. There are intimate scenes and then there are scenes that involve everyone. So it's a huge orchestra in which each person has a very specific part in the score.

What made this shoot unique for you?

For the first time, I've put my finger on what I've noticed in other films of his that I've seen, which is that infinite precision, that richness he brings to each shot, to each scene, to each character appearance. Everything has really been worked on with loving care. Nothing is left to chance - that's what strikes me and what I discovered on the set, that incredibly demanding nature, which doesn't surprise me, having seen his films, but which impresses me a lot.



Interview with

Guillaume

DE TONQUÉDEC

How did you feel when you read the script?

First of all, I remember when I met Jean-Paul. He made an appointment with me in a café named “Le Cyrano.” You can’t teach an old dog new tricks... He was like a startled young girl. I mean, he seemed to be even more nervous than I was. “But I really hope you’ll like it!” I said yes right away. Because it was him, because I know all his movies, and because he’s a filmmaker I adore. On top of that, the script convinced me because in his films, the characters are always in context. The stroke of genius in his writing is that the protagonists reveal themselves through situation. You’re immediately right in the heart of the matter: a family feud. What strikes me in his work as a whole, having seen him at work and with regards to his writing, is his characters’ total state of bewilderment. They are always learning things, and there is something in the way he directs them that is totally full of energy, generosity and strength.

Did he talk to you about the way he envisioned the characters?

After I’d read it, I asked to meet him to talk about the role and the story, to see what I was getting myself into. And then all of a sudden it became kind of moving, because he started talking to me about his own family, his relationship with his own father, his relationship with his brother and the difficulty he had relating to his own father. And when it’s Jean-Paul Rappeneau who is telling you some of these more personal things, it’s immediately an emotionally charged moment.

Tell us about Jean-Michel.

Well, it’s the best part in the whole film! All actors think their part is the best part, of course. What interested me is that the role belongs to that brand of characters who carry a secret around with them. So I was very touched by him right from the start. He might have taken his father’s place when he died, since his brother ran away and left. And he took on all the roles in a way, the son but also maybe the father, maybe even the lover - at a certain point in a scene he says to his mother, “Would you like me to run you a bath?” I find that line absolutely brilliant, to say that to your mother, in a hotel room. He is married, but you can tell his marriage has suffered from his mother’s influence since his father’s death, and that he can’t refuse anything for his mother. Apparently they don’t have children, which may be a telling fact. So he is a really interesting character.

And yet, isn’t he funny all the time?

Yes, and to be perfectly honest, I didn’t realize that it would be that funny. I was looking at the more dramatic side of the film. In fact, it’s very funny. That’s actually the distinguishing mark of very, very good comedies - that they are based on a drama for the characters who are living through them. But obviously, it’s funny to see because you say to yourself, “My God, I really wouldn’t like to be in that situation.”

What surprised you most about the way Rappeneau directs his actors?

There is extreme precision and a certain form of absolute intransigence in the way he works, especially on his text, and since he is a good writer, he’s right! There is always tension in the writing. If there is an “ah,” or a “well,” they were deliberately chosen, and it’s not up to the actors to try to add in a flavor that might make it mediocre. On the other hand, once you’ve internalized Jean-Paul’s instruction manual, once you’ve put his writing to use and can carry it within you entirely, there’s no problem. But it is true that it’s hard for an actor to get into it as much as he can, and this I’d never seen before, sorry Jean-Paul, and then stop right in the middle of a take, when you’re not doing your lines exactly how he wrote them. It’s extremely troubling for an actor who is doing a scene, he gets the impression that suddenly he’s completely naked. And that’s why I mentioned intransigence, but once you understand, it’s completely legitimate. Plus, he’s right to stop shooting a take that he won’t use in the edit anyway.

Doesn’t he also do short takes?

In some films you might shoot a scene out of order, according to different locations. But with Jean-Paul when you shoot a scene, you can shoot it out of order even within the same location, which means beginning with the end, then doing the middle, and then you come to the beginning, and then you reshoot a shot the next day or

three days later because there was a lighting problem. So you're even more in a state of dislocation than usual. I understand his films better having worked with him. His shots are always full. And he has that ability to control absolutely everything in a shot; for example, during the concert, he had control over the lady in the hat in the background on the left as well as the man who got up a little too early there on the right, both of whom are so-called extras, yet become characters in their own right.

Did you work much with your brother in the film, Mathieu Amalric?

We were going to read lines together and in the end, it never happened, and I think the bottom line is that Jean-Paul didn't feel it was all that necessary. We were thrown right into the hot pot together, so we did the work right on the set. And it's true that it worked out really well between us, in the way we played and bickered with each other. That's the thing that came out of it: in almost every scene, we're letting each other have it. We even get at each other with words. The feeling of brotherhood is always a love-hate relationship, which means love and hate are mixed up with respect and emotion for the other, even if you can also say awful things about him and really think them. It's a very interesting relationship.

How about Nicole Garcia, had you ever met her on the set before?

Never, but honestly, what great luck it was to have those kind of scenes to play with her. The writing, once again, is so good! They relate to each other with exasperation; they adore one another, but it's like all those people who live in a sort of enclosed world and need each other, who become reciprocal crutches to each other - there's a sort of annoyance. I can't remember who said, "Gratitude is the worst of all burdens." Meaning that the mother is obviously grateful to her son, who's been doing everything since his father died, and at the same time, it's hard. And what a superb actress Nicole is, in the childish relationship she has with her sons; she gives it so much color, it's really fascinating. We had so much fun.

Each time your character, Jean-Mi, is bewildered, he coughs.

Yes, that's the translation of his emotion - his body betrays him. It's great! I wrote a comment right on the script: "phenomenal." It's wonderful to find those kind of things in a text. What a pleasure for an actor!



CAST

Jérôme Varenne.....	Mathieu Amalric
Louise.....	Marine Vacth
Grégoire Piaggi.....	Gilles Lellouche
Suzanne Varenne.....	Nicole Garcia
Florence.....	Karin Viard
Jean-Michel Varenne.....	Guillaume de Tonquédec
Pierre Cotteret.....	André Dussollier
Chen-Lin.....	Gemma Chan
Fabienne.....	Claude Perron
Vouriot, the notary.....	Jean-Marie Winling
Maître Ribain, the lawyer.....	Yves Jacques

CREW

Director **Jean-Paul Rappeneau**
Screenplay **Jean-Paul Rappeneau**
..... in collaboration with
..... **Philippe Le Guay**
..... & **Julien Rappeneau**
Based on an original idea by **Jean-Paul Rappeneau**
..... & **Jacques Fieschi**

Director of Photography **Thierry Arbogast (A.F.C.)**
Production Designer **Arnaud de Moleron**
Music **Martin Rappeneau**
Production Manager **Bernard Bolzinger**
Camera **Berto (A.F.C.F.)**
Sound **Miguel Rejas**
..... **Jean Goudier**
..... **Jean-Paul Hurier**
Editor **Véronique Lange**
Script Supervisor **Chantal Pernecker**
Assistant Director **Joseph Rapp et Dylan Talleux**
Costume Design **Camille Janbon**
Casting Director **Antoinette Boulat**
Production Coordinator **Claire Langmann**
Visual Effects **Alain Carsoux**
Post-production Manager **Luc Augereau**

Producers **Michèle et Laurent Pétin**

Production **ARP**
Co-production **TF1 Films Production**
With the participation of **Canal +, OCS, TF1 et HD1**
With the support of **Région Ile-de-France**
With the participation of **Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée**

International Sales **TF1 International**

Format **Scope**
Sound **5.1**

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